

Foster Parent Cluster Newsletter

Spring 2008



Spring Has Sprung!

Finally the days of snow, sleet, and cold are over! It's time to put those winter coats and gloves away and get ready for spring!

A lot is happening at DFS these days. We're busy getting ready for National Foster Care Month in May, recruiting more foster



parents, supporting Clusters, trying to obtain new services for our kids and marketing to our fellow Delawareans.

Between spring cleaning, finishing up the school year and planning summer vacations, I'm sure you're just as busy!

Well, take a time out! Sit down and spend a few minutes reading this newsletter. I hope you will find it full of helpful and interesting information. I've done my best to entertain, but it could always be better. So as always, your

comments and suggestions are more than welcome!

In the meantime, dust off those sunglasses and flip-flops and enjoy the beautiful weather! Spend some time outside with your kids. Have a picnic in the park. Plant a pretty flower. Just have fun...

Enjoy!

-Kate

633-2643

katherine.russell@state.de.us

Inside this issue:

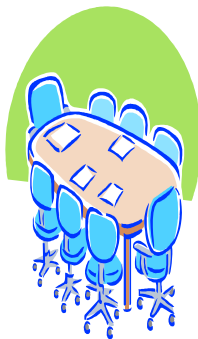
<i>Foster Care Month</i>	2
<i>Word Scramble</i>	2
<i>Foster Parent Information</i>	3
<i>Recruitment Contest</i>	3
<i>Foster Parent Success Stories</i>	4
<i>The Formal Dress Project</i>	5
<i>The 21st Century Fund</i>	5
<i>Academic Tips</i>	5
<i>Staff Spotlight</i>	6
<i>Working Together</i>	6
<i>Spotlights</i>	7
<i>Congratulations</i>	7
<i>MLK Day Recap</i>	7

Foster Care Administration Meetings

The Foster Care Staff invites you to come share your ideas, thoughts and concerns with the Foster Care Administration Team.

Let's work together to make the foster care system great!

Our goal is to address global concerns foster parents may have. We appreciate your willingness to help build a thriving foster care system.



Please join us in:

New Castle County
April 15th - 6 p.m.

Kent County
April 17th - 6 p.m.

Sussex County
April 22nd - 6 p.m.

More information to follow!
For details contact Kate Russell

THINK OF
THE CHILD
FIRST.

DELAWARE CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT

THANK YOU FOSTER PARENTS!

National Foster Care Month

As you already know, May is National Foster Care Month. We have several fun events planned this year to make the month a great one!

First, please join us in recognizing our wonderful foster parents (YOU!).

The annual Foster Parent Recognition Day will be held at the Modern Maturity Center in Dover on April 26th.

Then, help us kick off the month by visiting our pinwheel display



in Dover on May 1st to raise awareness about foster care. Join us in planting one of the 900+ pinwheels to represent each Delaware child in care. Feel free to encourage friends to attend and “give foster parenting a whirl!”

More information about both events to follow...

Please allow us to extend a special thanks to all of our foster parents this month for all that you do. It couldn't be done without you! THANK YOU!

Spring Word Scramble



1. ADDFFILO _____

2. ADEGNR _____

3. EHINNSSU _____

4. DDELP U _____

5. EFLORW _____

6. ACEJKT _____

7. GHORTW _____

8. ADINOPRR _____

9. ILPTU _____

10. ABELLMRU _____

ANSWERS: 1-DAFFODIL, 2-GARDEN, 3-SUNSHINE, 4-PUDDLE, 5-FLOWER, 6-JACKET, 7-GROWTH, 8-RAINDROP, 9-TULIP, 10-UMBRELLA



Clusters - Join Today!

NEW CASTLE COUNTY

Hockessin, Pike Creek, & Stanton:
Doris Hicks - 302-740-5946

North Wilmington & Claymont:
Cynthia Boyd - 250-2288

South Wilmington:
Peg Draper - 399-8779
Mary Bradley - 655-5421
New Castle: Eddi Ashby - 575-1046

Bear, Middletown, Townsend, & Odessa: VACANT

Newark:
Cheryl Hollingsworth - 454- 0339

KENT COUNTY

Smyrna:
Pam Barr - 659-5031

Camden:
Elliot & Lela Hardin - 697-7538

North Dover:
Tameka Crawford - 736-6072

South Dover:
Parris & Heidi Patten - 284-7500



SUSSEX COUNTY

Seaford:
Monica Sheets - 628-8900

Lincoln:
Norma Larimore - 422-0576

Greenwood:
Kim Disharoon - 858-8073

Bridgeville:
Toya Roberts - 337-8544

Call the Cluster Facilitator in your area to learn more...

Reduced Cost YMCA Memberships



The Delaware YMCA is proud to offer FOSTERING FUTURES: a Foster Care Financial Assistance Program. Through this program, foster families are able to obtain a YMCA membership at a greatly reduced cost. See your Foster Care Coordinator for more information and join today!

We Want You... To Join the Marketing, Recruitment, & Retention Committee!



Join DFS staff in brainstorming new ways to market, recruit, and retain foster parents!

Once a month, the committee meets in New Castle & Sussex Counties to discuss ideas and plans for the future. Who better to help guide us in the right direction than foster parents?

Please attend to offer your ideas and valuable insight! Contact Kate Russell for details.

Foster Parent Recruitment Contest

Remember, foster parents that refer a new foster parent to DFS will receive a \$100 bonus once the new foster parent has been approved and provided one month of satisfactory service as a foster parent.

The Cluster with the most referrals will win a prize. Also, the person with the most approved referrals will win a prize.

The Foster Care Unit has come up with a great new recruiting tool for foster parents! Ask your Coordinator for a stack of new recruitment cards. Then start handing them out to potential foster parents. You have the option of putting your name and phone number down (if you're comfortable) or just referring the person to the Helpline.

The contest deadline is December 31, 2008. Winners will be chosen at that time.

All questions about the contest may be directed to Kate Russell.



Pam Barr, an OUTSTANDING foster parent

By: Kent County Foster Home Coordinators



Pam Barr is one of the many great foster parents in Kent County. She has been active with DFS since November 2005. In fact, Pam accepted her first placement before even completing PRIDE training!

Pam is a single foster parent who works in New Castle County, yet

somehow manages to maintain her foster care placements in Kent County and facilitate all of the cluster meetings in her area. She is also an active participant in the Kent County Foster/Adoptive Parent Association.

Pam has been a huge help to the Foster Home Coordinators in Kent County. She has taken on the responsibility of mailing out all of our Cluster newsletters and any other additional information to our

foster parents.

With the help of the other cluster leaders, Pam was instrumental in our successful 2007 Christmas party held at Delaware State University.

On behalf of the Kent County Foster Care Unit, we wish to thank Pam for her tremendous commitment to our children and her work on behalf of the agency.

Pam is an amazing foster parent!

Bernadette Minton, a SUPER foster parent

By: Brenda Roark, New Castle County Foster Home Coordinator

Bernadette Minton has been a foster parent since April 2007. I remember her from teaching PRIDE. She was open, asked appropriate questions and sometimes was shocked at what she heard in the classroom. I had a great feeling about Bernadette and was very happy to approve her as a foster parent.

Her first placements were two sisters who had been in two separate foster homes. The girls thrived in her home. The youngest suffered from low self esteem because of past issues. Bernadette began working with her and the child blossomed. It was a

beautiful situation to watch.

Bernadette also extended herself to the girls' grandmother. Both the foster mom and the girls would leave messages for grandmom to help keep her motivated to have the children return home.

It was both painful and wonderful when the girls returned home. Before the girls left, they asked her if they could celebrate their birthday at Bernadette's home. They had seen the family celebrate birthdays while in her home and wanted to have the grand event for their special days. They returned to visit Bernadette and

celebrated their birthdays with a huge party.

Bernadette cared for the girls for four months but the memories and love they shared was enough for a whole lifetime. Bernadette has co-trained PRIDE with me and the whole class fell in love with her. She incorporates all of the qualities that we look for in a foster parent. She is patient, kind, loving, thinks outside of the box, great communicator, picks her battles and treats any child in her home like she gave birth to them herself.

I love Bernadette!!

The Sheets Family, EXCEPTIONAL foster parents

By: Trudi Hudson, Sussex County Foster Home Coordinator

I would like to publicly thank foster parent Derek Sheets for coming to Pride, Session Five - Supporting Family Relationships, to talk about his family's work with birth families.

Derek and his wife, Monica, are very open minded when working with birth parents. They offer to meet with birth parents and try to form relationships that allow the parents to feel comfortable with them. They allow visits in their home (when

appropriate), give their home number to birth parents and try to become a support for the families.

Derek and Monica have had 12 children placed with them since their home was opened in July 2004. They have maintained contact with many of the families after the children they fostered went home.

They are a big support to the mother of Sarah R. and Jonathan R., a sibling group who were one and two



years old when they came to live with the Sheets'. The Sheets' take Sarah and Jonathan every other weekend to give their mom a break. They also kept the children when mom recently had another baby.

The Sheets' are wonderful foster parents!



The Formal Dress Project



Every high school girl dreams of going to the prom. Unfortunately, some girls in foster care forgo that dream because of the high cost of a prom dress.

Well this year, have no fear because the Formal Dress Project is here!

With the help of Tracy Burns and her brainchild, the Formal Dress Project, tons of girls will receive free dresses this prom season.

Hundreds of new and gently used dresses have been donated to the project and will be available to girls in care for this prom season.

If you're interested in obtaining more information or would like to take part in this wonderful project, contact Kate Russell at 633-2643 or katherine.russell@state.de.us.

Visit the organizations website <http://formaldressproject.com/34.html> for more information.

Need help paying for those trombone lessons??

Would your foster child enjoy taking karate or art lessons? How about participating in a acting camp over the summer?

Thanks to the 21st Century fund, these dreams can come true! This special fund provides experiences that help children define their strengths, improve their self-esteem and build a sense of hope for the future.

The goal is to help a child achieve their potential in a particular talent or interest otherwise not affordable or available to them. And the best part is - ALL foster children are eligible!

If you're interested in obtaining these funds for your foster children, contact your worker to complete the necessary form.

Requests of up to \$100 will be considered. Make a request today!

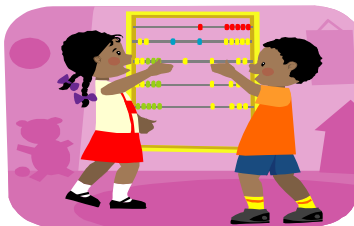
Visit
<http://kids.delaware.gov/information/donate21stcenturyfund.shtml>
for more information!

Help your child finish up the school year strong!

As mentioned on www.kidsource.com, research shows that when families get involved, their children:

- Get better grades and test scores
- Graduate high school at higher rates
- Are more likely to go college
- Are better behaved and have more positive attitudes

As the school year comes to a close, take a little extra effort to help your child finish on a positive note.



You can try:

- reading together
- establishing a homework routine
- expressing high expectations
- communicating with the school and teachers
- using community resources

Source: U.S. Department of Education





DFS Staff Spotlight - Brenda Roark

Brenda is a Foster Care Coordinator at the University Plaza

office in New Castle County. She has been with DFS for eight years. Brenda is responsible for foster parent training and support, finding foster homes for children in care, and approving new foster homes in NCC. She says she is also lucky enough to write adoption home studies and, “be a part of something so beautiful!”

Brenda’s favorite part of the job is supporting her foster parents; she

just wishes she had more time to visit with families in their homes. Brenda also enjoys teaching PRIDE classes.

In her spare time Brenda loves spending time with her two sons, learning and traveling. Her favorite part of traveling is planning the trip! Brenda really enjoys researching the destination and learning about the culture she will experience. As most of her foster parents know, Brenda has a passion for New Mexico. She loves the Spanish & Native American cultures the state has to offer.

After a spirit-reviving trip to New Mexico, Brenda is reenergized and ready to get back to business!

Brenda will be graduating with her masters degree in December. She hopes to use her knowledge to continue her positive work.

Brenda hopes that DFS continues to secure more foster homes for our kids. For now she would like to thank all our current foster parents, especially her cluster. She says, “I think my foster parents are the greatest! I’m lucky and grateful to work with such great families!”

Families Working Together

By: Brenda Roark, New Castle County Foster Home Coordinator

Colette and Bill Cain are currently caring for five children in their New Castle County home. They have done a great job attending training, participating in the children’s school activities and therapy appointments and bringing new foster families into the fold. The Cains have been responsible for having three new foster families join the Division in 2007.

The Cains encouraged Diane and Robert Hess to attend PRIDE. Before PRIDE was even completed, the Hess family began caring for a sibling group of four foster children.



The Cain and Hess families have begun a special Sunday morning tradition. Every Sunday morning, the families join together and make a large breakfast. There are always at least 13 people eating together. They make pancakes, eggs, bacon, toast and sausage.

After eating breakfast together, all of the children, along with Bill and Robert, head outside to play football. Diane said they are a “mighty mess” when they are done, but have such a great time playing.

Bill and Robert noticed that one of the boys had great potential as a football player. Playing football has helped this little boy raise his self-confidence to a level the families had not seen before.

The children look forward to this Sunday morning tradition and it’s a perfect way to support one another.

Great job Cain and Hess families!

More Hess Family News...

Brandon had perfect attendance this past marking period!

Elizabeth brought an “F” up to an “A” on her last report card!

Joseph brought an “F” up to an “A” on his last report card!

Great job, Brandon, Elizabeth, & Joseph!
Keep up the good work!



More Cain Family News...

Zaire was “Student of the Month” for September at Leasure Elementary & had perfect attendance this marking period!

Juaira had perfect attendance this marking period!

Anthony has had perfect attendance every marking period!

Great job, Zaire, Juaira, and Anthony!
Keep up the good work!



Spotlight on Celebrity Foster Kids: Ice-T



BIRTH: Ice-T, whose given name is Tracy Morrow, was born February 16, 1968 in Newark, New Jersey.

FOSTER CARE EXPERIENCE: Ice-T was an only child whose parents were both tragically killed in an auto accident when he was very young. With no family able to care for him in New Jersey, Ice-T went to live with relatives in Los Angeles.

Unfortunately, they could not care for him. To them, little Tracy was a burden, a feeling they did not hide from him. He was placed in foster care in a rough area - South Central Los Angeles. He became a member of a gang and participated in many acts of violence.

CLAIM TO FAME: Eventually Ice-T left the gang and became a hip-hop superstar. Today, he is considered one of the founding fathers of gangsta rap. His performances reflect his violent experiences of the

L.A. streets. Ice-T has branched out to launch his own record label releasing groundbreaking rap albums. He has written a book and has lectured in prisons, high schools and colleges as a spokesman for youth. He is also an accomplished actor. He has appeared in numerous films, movies and television shows.

FUN FACT: Interestingly enough, Ice-T now has a steady role playing a police officer who attempts to cease gang violence on NBC's "Law & Order - SVU."

Welcome New Foster Parents!

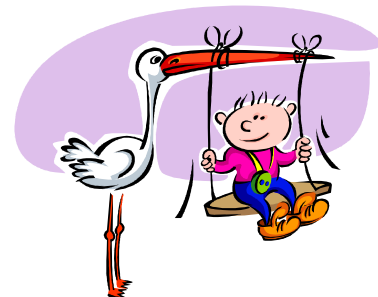


Sharon Brainard, New Castle
Latanya Duncan, New Castle
Melinda Galimore, Seaford
Amber Garneski, New Castle
Paula Jones, Bridgeville
Heather Lynch-James, Middletown
Rick & Deidre Morris, Bear
Elizabeth Whaley, Seaford

Bringing home baby (or child!)... FOR GOOD!

Congratulations to:

Ronald & Cynthia Knight on the adoption of Mia!



Martin Luther King Day Celebration Recap

On Monday, January 21, foster care staff Kate Russell and Heather McCleery chaperoned three foster children on a trip to the Sanford School in Hockessin for a celebration in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Day.

Michael F., Brooklyn S., and Messiah W. participated in art and musical activities alongside Sanford Lower School students in hopes of promoting tolerance. In addition to enjoying a pizza lunch and playing outside with their new friends, the children attended a Walnut Street Theatre production of *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* at the Sanford Sports Center.

Special congratulations to Brooklyn, whose painting will be featured in a Sanford School Art Show this Spring (more information to come.)

A great time was had by all at this wonderful event! Thank you Sanford!!



Spring 2008

State of Delaware
Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families
Division of Family Services

Delaware Youth and Family Center
1825 Faulkland Road
Wilmington, DE 19805
370630

"Official Business, Penalty For Private Use \$300"

www.kids.delaware.gov

**THINK OF
THE CHILD
FIRST.**

DELAWARE CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT



Remember to sign up for trainings this spring! We are offering several new courses and DVD based classes.

Refer to your training newsletter or contact your coordinator for more information!